

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-10 ACDA-05 AID-05 SAJ-01 SAM-01 /097 W

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P R 062208Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3854

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USCINCEUR

COMIDEASTFOR

AMCONSUL ASMARA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 25854

E.O. 11652: XGDS-L

TAGS: FR, XF

SUBJECT: QUAI THINKING ABOUT FUTURE OF TFAI

REF: (A) ADDIS 9668 (B) PARIS 18701 (C) PARIS 17697

(ALL NOTAL)

SUMMARY: QUAI OFFICIAL EXPECTS THE PRESIDENT WILL SOON
TAKE AN INITIATIVE ON THE TFAI, PERHAPS ANNOUNCING
A NEW REFERENDUM. THIS WOULD REQUIRE HIM TO CONVINCE
SEVERAL MAJORITY DEPUTIES THAT DJIBOUTI IS EXPENDABLE.
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GOF TECHNICIANS ARE STUDYING WAYS OF GUARANTEEING THE

INDEPENDENCE OF A FUTURE TFAI STATE BY ITS NEIGHBORS, REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS OR, EVENTUALLY, THE UN. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF A NEW REFERENDUM WOULD BE USEFUL TO FRANCE IN THE UNGA CONTEXT, BUT THE PROBLEMS OF OBTAINING GUARANTEES AND CONVINCING RELUCTANT DEPUTIES MAY CAUSE DELAY. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING DISCUSSION WITH EMBOFF OCTOBER 3, QUAI ACTING DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR AFRICA CHAUVEAU OFFERED ON A HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL BASIS HIS "IMPRESSION" THAT THE PRESIDENT OR PRIME MINISTER MIGHT SHORTLY TAKE AN INITIATIVE ON THE TFAI. THIS INITIATIVE, WHICH "PROBABLY WILL NOT COME FOR WEEKS" MAY BE THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF A NEW REFERENDUM IN THE TERRITORY. THE UNSTATED ASSUMPTION BEING THAT THIS TIME THE VOTERS WILL OPT FOR INDEPENDENCE. CHAUVEAU SAID THAT THE REFERENDUM IDEA IS GAINING GROUND.

2. CHAUVEAU OBSERVED THAT THE TFAI IS AT LEAST AS MUCH A FRENCH DOMESTIC PROBLEM AS A FOREIGN POLICY QUESTION. Giscard must sell his idea to recalcitrant deputies such as Debre and Messmer before he can move forward. Since the Comoros is a more urgent matter (see Septel), he said, Giscard may not be in a position to press the parliamentarians on Djibouti for some time.

3. AGAIN ASKING THAT THE INFORMATION BE CLOSELY HELD, CHAUVEAU SAID THAT THE WORKING LEVEL IN THE QUAI AND THE SECRETARIAT FOR OVERSEAS DEPARTMENTS AND TERRITORIES (DOM-TOM) ARE DOING CONTINGENCY PLANNING, WITHOUT MINISTERIAL AUTHORIZATION, ON THE TFAI'S POST-REFERENDUM FUTURE. INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEES FOR AN INDEPENDENT STATE ARE AT THE HEART OF CURRENT THINKING SINCE THEY WOULD BE REQUIRED TO KEEP THE TERRITORY FROM FALLING TO THE SOMALIS, THEREBY INCREASING SOVIET INFLUENCE IN THE REGION, OR TO THE ETHIOPIANS, AN OUTCOME THAT WOULD INSURE PERMANENT INSTABILITY IN THE HORN.

4. QUAI AND DOM-TOM PLANNERS ARE CENTERING THEIR CONFIDENTIAL

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EFFORTS ON A SYSTEM OF GUARANTEES BY THE RED SEA STATES -- SAUDI ARABIA, THE TWO YEMENS AND, PERHAPS, EGYPT, IN ADDITION TO ETHIOPIA AND SOMALIA. IF NOT SUCCESSFUL WITH DJIBOUTI'S NEIGHBORS, THE FRENCH ARE THINKING OF OAU AND ARAB LEAGUE GUARANTEES, BUT THIS WOULD REQUIRE MUCH CLOSER FRENCH RELATIONS WITH THESE ORGANIZATIONS, ESPECIALLY THE OAU, THAN FRANCE HAS HERETOFORE MAINTAINED, CHAUVEAU SAID. FAILING SUCH EFFORTS, THE FRENCH

ARE NOT EXCLUDING A REQUEST TO THE UN FOR ASSISTANCE.
CHAUVENT UNDERLINED THAT THESE IDEAS ARE STILL IN THE
STUDY STAGE AND THAT IT IS TOO EARLY TO APPROACH
NEIGHBORING STATES OR THE REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.

5. ASKED WHETHER THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE MIGHT BE
LESS INCLINED THAN THE QUAI AND THE DOM-TOM TO LEAVE
DJIBOUTI, CHAUVENT ASSERTED THAT THE TERRITORY "IS
NOT VITAL, EVEN STRATEGICALLY" FOR FRANCE. HE ADDED,

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HOWEVER, THAT THE QUESTION OF A FRENCH BASE IN AN
INDEPENDENT TFAI WOULD NEED FURTHER STUDY.

6. COMMENT: GIVEN BUREAUCRATIC LETHARGY, WE SUPPOSE
THAT THIS "CONTINGENCY PLANNING" IS BASED ON VERY
CLEAR SIGNALS OF GISCARD'S INTENTIONS. AND DESPITE
CHAUVET'S DISCLAIMER, WE THINK IT LIKELY THAT
GISCARD'S INITIATIVE WILL COME DURING THE CURRENT
SESSION OF THE UNGA. AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF A NEW TFAI
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REFERENDUM, COUPLED WITH RESOLUTION OF THE COMORIAN
QUESTION, WOULD PLACE FRANCE IN A BETTER POSITION
VIS-A-VIS AFRICAN AND THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES IN NEW YORK
AND THUS DILUTE THEIR CRITICISM OF THE UNPOPULAR VOTES
WHICH FRANCE MAY MAKE IN ORDER TO PROTECT ITS INTERESTS
IN SOUTH AFRICA.

7. HOWEVER, IF IT BECOMES EVIDENT THAT NEIGHBORLY OR
OTHER GUARANTEES WILL NOT SOON BE POSSIBLE, THE FRENCH
MAY DELAY THE ANNOUNCEMENT AND WILL DOUBTLESS TRY TO
EXTEND THE REFERENDUM PROCESS AND TO DELAY ANY TRANSFER
OF AUTHORITY UNTIL ADEQUATE ARRANGEMENTS FOR INSURING
A REASONABLE DEGREE OF FUTURE STABILITY IN THE HORN
CAN BE MADE. A POLITICAL CALCULATION THAT THIS IS NOT
THE MOMENT TO PRESS RELUCTANT MEMBERS OF THE UDR
MAJORITY TO APPROVE A NEW REFERENDUM OR HIS INABILITY
TO MOVE THEM MIGHT ALSO CAUSE GISCARD TO DELAY HIS
INITIATIVE.

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